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[67] tries. Although this was truer of the immigrant Chinese than of the immigrant Indians, the comparative inertia of the latter was compensated for by a more aggressive championship of their cause on the part of their compatriots at home. In the case of Malaya, where the indigenous population was numerically weak and psychologically passive, the Central Indian Association of Malaya and the Congress Party leaders prodded the Government of India to exert pressure upon the officials at Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to grant greater economic and political privileges to the Indians in Malaya. The governments and planters of Malaya, however, with the curtailment in their labor needs resulting from the current cut in rubber export, felt free to resist this pressure, even at the price of the embargo placed in 1938 on emigration to Malaya of assisted Indian labor.

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167 In the case of the Chinese the situation was different. Smaller numbers were employed in the rubber industry and larger ones in mining. More of them were able to graduate from contract labor into other occupations, especially retail business, farming, and small trades. They tended to stay longer because of the insecurity of enterprise in south China. Moreover, the home government was in a much weaker position than that of India to exert pressure on the governments of Malaya. These remained free to regulate at their pleasure the spontaneous flow of Chinese immigrants and to keep watch on the political activities of resident Chinese. In Burma, however, the British authorities were unable to keep the situation so well in hand. Serious anti-Indian rioting broke out in 1938, and the strength of the Burman nationalists in the government (especially after separation from India in 1937) enabled it to negotiate an agreement with India restricting the number of Indian immigrants and permitting the exercise of more control over those domiciled in the country.

In Indochina and the Netherlands Indies the governments were able to keep the immigrant problem from assuming intensity because of the smaller proportion of Chinese in relation to the native populations. In all these countries, however, Chinese laborers suffered somewhat from the bad reputation of those of their countrymen who as merchants and moneylenders had acquired an economic power which differed from that of other aliens in that it affected directly and visibly the welfare of large numbers.

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● 468 All the governments, including that of Siam, were compelled by public opinion to exert more control over the immigrant minorities. In so doing, they faced unpleasant alternatives. The demand of Chinese and Indian laborers for better working conditions and improved political status was accompanied by a threat to cut off entirely the flow of emigration. Encouraged by nationalist groups, they engaged in strikes and boycotts. If these succeeded, other demands would probably be made; and

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the indigenous peoples were not sufficiently willing, numerous, or skilled to replace the immigrant laborers. A higher wage scale, they feared, might compel many firms either to go out of business or to install expensive machinery. Already local nationalists, succumbing to the philosophy of economic self-sufficiency, were demanding intensive programs of government-aided industrialization. If such demands were acceded to, the industrialists and labor leaders in the home country could be expected to protest strongly against the new competition. 464 668 563 167 468

In this complex situation, the colonial governments of Southeast Asia gradually yielded to the popular demands, although loath to abandon their traditional function as instruments of capitalist planning in the home countries. With the exception, however, of the embryonic and ineffective industrial programs of the Siamese and Burmese governments and the more constructive policy of the Netherlands Indies for a planned industrialization, none of the countries did much in this direction. None was forced as yet to consider very seriously that change in colonial relationship which would result from general economic development in the world and specifically from the new role that China and India would inevitably play before long in Southeast Asia. The Japanese invasion interrupted the efforts of local governments toward a solution of these labor problems. It also injected new elements into the situation. [664]

LABOR ORGANIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

FOR VARIOUS REASONS an organized labor movement has never developed in Southeast Asia to notable dimensions. In large part this was because of the predominance of alien, transient, and illiterate labor forces, divided—even when of the same nationality—by geographical and linguistic differences. The Indians were further subdivided by caste and religious sect. The Chinese had a far better family, guild, and secret-society organization; but the antagonisms imported as an integral part of these organizations provoked periodic violence. Later the political and gangster elements which operated within their framework impelled all the governments throughout Southeast Asia to control them severely. 467 575 563 668

National solidarity among the immigrant labor groups was further broken up by the methods of recruitment and management. Agents and foremen exploited their compatriots for their own personal gain, until the governments concerned were gradually and reluctantly forced to intervene. Asiatic agents behaved much as recruiting agents of emi- 466 167

467 of unions in industries the operation of which did not directly affect the public order.

467 The employers' resistance to unionization derived naturally from their desire to have available an abundant supply of cheap labor. They had on their side, as an argument that must weigh heavily with the governments, the involvement which such organizations as existed were believed to have with subversive political parties and leaders. Communism was reported to be rife among the Chinese labor groups. Indian Congress emissaries were supposed to be stirring up the traditionally docile Indian coolies. The growing wave of strikes and riots which occurred during the second part of the inter-war period, particularly in the middle and late 1930's, had the effect of modifying the opposition of the employer groups. Violence or work stoppages often took place without any formulation of demands or without the workers' support of the spokesman theoretically representing their views. At least some employers therefore began to see the advantage of dealing with responsible labor leaders and of forcing any subversive elements in the workers' associations out into the open.

466 Thus in Malaya, in 1939, legislation was introduced (but not enforced until 1941) authorizing and facilitating the functioning of unions. Employers in Indochina, who also had long opposed unionization, moved similarly in the latter part of the decade toward a recognition of the need for it. In the Netherlands Indies, membership in unions, after a setback in the early 1930's, slowly increased, although by far the largest unions were still composed of government officials and professional men. In [563] Burma, as in Siam, unionization was impeded by the presence of a predominantly alien body of workers to whose welfare the nationals of both countries were either hostile or indifferent. Such organizations as existed survived only insofar as the governments in each country favored them as useful aids in preventing curtailment of production. Their development, however, was controlled lest they harbor elements striving to overthrow the established order.

[648] The loss of their colonies by the Western powers and anti-colonial Japanese propaganda naturally induced a greater consciousness on their part of the existence of labor problems that must be coped with if the larger economic and social programs are to succeed. From the resolutions passed at the International Labour Organization's conference at Philadelphia in 1944,¹ it appears to have been generally recognized that the colonial governments could no longer rely on paternalistic measures or the voluntary cooperation of individual employers.

¹ Bruno Lasker, "A Labor Code for Dependent Peoples," *Far Eastern Survey*, XIII, 12, June 14, 1944, pp. 103-10.

727 together with the curtailment of alien Asiatic immigration, afforded
464 plenty of jobs for those who were willing, or were forced, to work for wages paid in inflated currency.

727 In the food-surplus countries—Burma, Siam, and Indochina—which
433 were also those receiving the most favored political treatment at the
464 hands of the Japanese, the areas under rice and allied crops declined. The decrease in the number of draft animals through disease and Japanese requisitioning; the lack of implements; and, above all, the loss of former export markets caused the local farmers to cultivate very little more than their families required, and there was a marked exodus from the agricultural communities to the cities or places of more remunerative employment. In the countries of food deficiency—Malaya and the Outer Islands of the East Indies—the Japanese made great efforts and probably succeeded in increasing the area under food-crop cultivation, but never to the point of self-sufficiency. The Japanese also arbitrarily prohibited certain industries as “nonessential” and shifted the workers to others accordingly.

727 Very little information is available as to the wages paid during the
465 Japanese occupation. Where local labor was limited and native goodwill was sought, as in Siam, the Japanese seem to have paid high wages from the outset. In densely populated areas like Java, wages were reportedly decreased immediately after the occupation. In time, and with the ever greater need for additional labor services, the Japanese permitted successive wage rises. But nowhere did wage increases keep pace with the more rapidly rising cost of living and they had to be supplemented by allowances, medals, and words of praise. The groups that suffered most from this disparity were the Asiatic government-servant and white-collar class, whose numbers had always exceeded the demand and whose services were far less necessary to the Japanese than was manual labor.

727 Labor legislation was passed only in negative measures of regimentation and outlawing of strikes. Nevertheless, reports of strikes periodically filtered through the barrage of Japanese propaganda, particularly a few that took place in Indochina and Burma. Most of them registered grievances against low pay, high living costs, and heavy taxation, but some were doubtless of a political character—difficult to distinguish from sabotage. Following one strike in 1943, the Cochinchina police arrested a number of “communists.” In Malaya and Indonesia, control by the Japanese military and naval forces was not exercised through any native administration, and the strictness of their rule seems to have precluded any possible recourse to the strike weapon.

727 In Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia the Japanese set up a bewildering
466 array of organizations into which the local peoples were regimented by communal, occupational, religious, sex, and age groups. Not only did